



January 24, 2017

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-17-20

SUBJECT: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program–Fiscal Year 2017 Working Lands for Wildlife Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative

Purpose: Provide guidance on administering the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative (LPCI) available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Expiration Date: September 30, 2017

Background

WLFW LPCI is an effort between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that leverages capabilities and resources, targets assistance where it is most needed, cooperatively engages state and local partners, and collaboratively works with agricultural producers, forest land managers, and Tribes. NRCS and USFWS initially selected seven at-risk species whose decline can be reversed given sufficient resources and landowner participation. WLFW LPCI promotes voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private and Tribal lands.

The primary objectives of WLFW LPCI are to:

- Provide landowners with financial and technical assistance to help them improve their lands through wildlife habitat management and protection.
- Implement conservation practices (CPs) that will help restore populations of declining wildlife species (candidate, federally listed endangered and threatened, or other at-risk wildlife species).
- Provide landowners with Endangered Species Act regulatory certainty and confidence that conservation investments they make on their lands today can help sustain their operations over the long term.

Application evaluation cutoff period was announced under Bulletin KS300-16-40–Fiscal Year 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program Cutoff Date. Field offices will accept applications on a continuous basis. Applications received after the announced cutoff period will be considered the next cutoff period.

Screening Criteria

Per the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT), applications will be considered HIGH priority if more than 50 percent of the offered acreage is defined as a “focal area” (CHAT Zone 1) or “connectivity zone” (CHAT Zone 2).

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Applications will be considered MEDIUM priority if more than 50 percent of the offered acreage is either:

- (1) In CHAT Zone 3 (Modeled Habitat) or
- (2) Has documented presence of lesser prairie-chickens

Applications will be considered LOW priority if more than 50 percent of the offered acreage is in CHAT Zone 4 (Modeled Non-habitat).

All other applications outside of the above described "Screening Criteria" shall not be considered for funding through WLFW LPCI and are **INELIGIBLE**.

See Attachment 1 for the WLFW LPCI priority areas.

Eligible Land Uses, Resource Concerns, and CPs

The eligible land uses, resource concerns, and CPs are available in Attachment 2.

Core CP 645, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, is required in the conservation plan. Core CP 528, Prescribed Grazing, is required in the conservation plan in contracts where grazing occurs and will receive Financial Assistance (FA), if not already established, per program policy. Supporting CPs are eligible for WLFW LPCI FA to the extent that they are needed to support the core CPs.

All WLFW LPCI applicants must agree to follow the CP standards and treatment measures as described in the USFWS Biological Opinion in order to be eligible for screening and ranking. This report is posted in Section II of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) under Threatened and Endangered Species.

Program Contracts System (ProTracts) Ranking Tool

All application will be ranked in the ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT). The ProTracts fund code for WLFW LPCI is "LPCI." The ProTracts cost list is "KScountynameEQIP2017-01-EQIP." The Toolkit cost list is "KS17_EQIP."

National questions are consistent for all EQIP applications. Refer to Bulletin KS300-17-8—Fiscal Year 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program—Ranking Process—National Priorities for additional information on national questions. A copy of the state and local ranking questions is provided in Attachment 3.

NOTE: State issued question number one refers to active leks. Lek data provided in the Conservation Programs Geographic Information System (GIS) Interface (CPGI) tool is for all known Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC) leks, not necessarily all ACTIVE LPC leks. This data is provided to **assist** in answering LPCI state question number 1. Answering "yes" to this question will **NOT** be solely based on the CPGI data.

If a producer has identified an undocumented (not shown in GIS CPGI tool data) active lek on their operation, ranking points may be obtained if the active lek is confirmed by a Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) area biologist and a NRCS range conservationist.

Participants must be willing to share this information (documented in CPGI or undocumented) to receive points. Under a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, certain parts of the

NRCS case file can be released.

Technical Assistance

KDWPT area biologists will assist with LPC habitat assessments. Contract development, contract administration, contract reviews, and follow-up for WLFW LPCI contracts is the responsibility of NRCS.

Contact: Forward all questions through established channels to Joel A. Willhoft, Resource Conservationist, at (785) 624-3127 or email joel.willhoft@ks.usda.gov.

(signed)

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments